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Note verbale dated 6 August 2018 from the Permanent Mission of Bulgaria to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Bulgaria to the United Nations, in reference to the candidature of the Republic of Bulgaria to the Human Rights Council for the term 2019–2021 and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251, has the honour to transmit herewith the voluntary pledges and commitments of the Republic of Bulgaria for the promotion and protection of all human rights (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Bulgaria would be grateful if the present note and its annex were circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 117 (d) of the provisional agenda.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 6 August 2018 from the Permanent Mission of Bulgaria to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Candidature of Bulgaria to the Human Rights Council, 2019–2021

Voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251

1. The Republic of Bulgaria presents its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the term 2019–2021, the elections for which will be held in New York during the seventy-third session of the General Assembly, in 2018.

2. Bulgaria strongly upholds the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, which articulates a commitment to universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind. Bulgaria is fully committed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and has adopted a wide range of legislative, institutional, policy and administrative measures to fulfil its national, regional and international obligations relating to human rights.

3. The Republic of Bulgaria is presenting its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the first time. Bulgaria pledges to strengthen the membership of the Council and adhere to its membership standards.

4. Bulgaria aims to apply objective, human rights-based criteria in addressing situations of concern and remains fully committed to further strengthening its fruitful cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and all international human rights mechanisms.

5. Building on our traditional active engagement with United Nations human rights bodies and the rich experience of successfully chairing the former Commission on Human Rights and the Third Committee of the General Assembly, we endeavour to continue to promote a strong human rights-based approach in the work of the United Nations.

6. Bulgaria strongly maintains the standpoint that all human rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible and interdependent, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

7. The Republic of Bulgaria has ratified seven core international human rights instruments and is continuously engaged in timely reporting on their implementation. Bulgaria is also party to the major human rights treaties at the regional level and fully recognizes the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.

8. In line with its long-standing commitment to promoting and protecting human rights for all and its consistent engagement and balanced position in international human rights forums, the Republic of Bulgaria makes the pledges set out below with regard to its candidature to the Human Rights Council.

Commitments at the international level

9. Bulgaria will further support the work and independence of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations human rights mechanisms, the special procedures of the Human Rights Council and the human rights mandate holders.

10. We endeavour to support initiatives aimed at strengthening the efficiency of the Human Rights Council, improving its methods of work and ensuring its effectiveness

and transparency. Bulgaria is committed to promoting universal participation in the Human Rights Council. Ensuring that the work of the Council has a direct impact on the ground should be a prerogative for all of us.

11. Looking forward to the review of the United Nations human rights treaty body system by the General Assembly in 2020, Bulgaria will engage in and support all efforts aimed at further strengthening the independence, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness of the treaty bodies and special procedures.

12. Bulgaria will work to further strengthen the role of the universal periodic review as an excellent and unique tool for peer review and the sharing of good practices in the field of human rights, while also considering the challenges remaining after the first two full cycles of the review.

13. Bulgaria will support common efforts to bring grave country-specific situations to the attention of the United Nations and will ensure that they are addressed in proper ways, demanding accountability and ending impunity.

14. Our actions for promoting and protecting human rights will also be framed within an integrated approach to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from a human rights perspective.

15. The Republic of Bulgaria will encourage open discussions on all human rights-related topics with the participation of civil society and human rights defenders. Building on its experience as Vice-Chair and Rapporteur of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations of the Economic and Social Council for the period 2011–2014, Bulgaria will continue to support the participation of civil society at the United Nations.

16. The protection and promotion of and respect for the rights of the child is a key priority on Bulgaria's human rights agenda and will feature as an important aspect of its membership of the Human Rights Council. Bulgaria contributed to the advancement of children's rights as Vice-President of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 2014 and as a founding member and Co-Chair of the Group of Friends for Children and Sustainable Development Goals.

17. Bulgaria will continue to support and actively participate in the elaboration of Human Rights Council and General Assembly resolutions on the rights of the child and will work to maintain the consensual nature of those resolutions. We will aim to put a special focus on inclusive education and early childhood development, as equal access to education and health services is crucial to ensuring the realization of all rights of the child. Considering the expertise we have acquired through our fruitful cooperation with the International Organization for Migration, OHCHR, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF and non-governmental organizations, we will also pay particular attention to the rights of migrant children.

18. Building on Bulgaria's long-standing traditions in the field of equality between women and men, we intend to advance the efforts of the international community to achieve full gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and the full realization of their human rights. Bulgaria will focus on actively sharing good practices relating to the equal participation of women in political, economic and public life and in decision-making processes at all levels.

19. As President of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for the period 2017–2018, Bulgaria has contributed to strengthening the implementation of the Convention through a more inclusive and participatory approach involving persons with disabilities and the organizations that represent them. Progressing from that successful experience, we will maintain and develop our active and constructive engagement with all initiatives to promote and

protect the rights of persons with disabilities for their full participation in all aspects of life on an equal basis with others.

20. In a world of increasing threats to security, maintaining a tolerant society is a serious challenge. In line with Bulgaria's long-standing tradition of tolerance and acceptance, we will continue to work actively for the elimination all forms of discrimination and violence, promoting the principles of equality and non-discrimination in all decisions and actions of the Human Rights Council.

21. The Republic of Bulgaria puts special emphasis on the promotion of a culture of peace, tolerance, understanding, pluralism, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, human rights education and respect for cultural diversity to promote the formation of positive attitudes towards persons belonging to different ethnic or religious communities.

22. Considering the challenges of the modern age, trafficking in human beings and smuggling should be regarded as grave violations of human rights with huge human, social and economic implications that require a concerted global response. Bulgaria will advocate addressing the root causes of trafficking, including poverty, unemployment, lack of educational opportunities, social exclusion and marginalization.

Commitments at the national level

23. The Republic of Bulgaria will continue to report regularly to the United Nations treaty bodies on the implementation of all human rights instruments ratified by the country. We will also maintain an active dialogue and cooperation with human rights mechanisms on individual complaints.

24. Bulgaria will also endeavour to enhance the national implementation of all human rights instruments and of the recommendations of the treaty bodies and will consider widening the scope of its international obligations.

25. Contemplating the third cycle of the universal periodic review, the Republic of Bulgaria intends to submit a midterm review by the end of 2018.

26. Having issued a standing invitation in March 2001 to all special procedures mandate holders, Bulgaria will uphold that invitation and will continue to offer them full cooperation.

27. The Republic of Bulgaria will continue to foster multilateral cooperation in the field of human rights, further strengthening the country's collaboration with OHCHR and the human rights mechanisms of the United Nations system, as well as regional human rights bodies.

28. We will focus on the following priority areas:

(a) Advancing the broad interministerial and public dialogue with all stakeholders for the promotion and protection of the human rights of all persons residing in Bulgaria;

(b) Promoting social, economic and cultural rights, with special attention to the protection of children and their rights and the advancement of gender equality and the rights of persons with disabilities and of other vulnerable groups;

(c) Strengthening ethnic and religious tolerance, the freedom of speech and expression and the freedom of religion or belief;

(d) Protecting the rights of migrants and refugees;

(e) Taking targeted actions to enhance the rule of law, democracy and good governance.

29. The Republic of Bulgaria will continue to effectively involve civil society representatives, social partners and other stakeholders in all human rights-related policymaking and decision-making processes at all levels.

30. Bulgaria will continue to support the human rights-based approach to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

31. On the basis of respect for democracy, human rights and the rule of law, Bulgaria will strive to spread awareness for the need to increase the effectiveness of national legislation, policies and programmes in the field of human rights and to strengthen the capacity of national human rights institutions to promote and protect human rights.